



# Refuge Reporter

Happenings at Shiawassee National Wildlife Refuge

Volume 7, Issue 4

## Refuge Open House Weekend is September 11 and 12

By Becky Goche, Park Ranger

The annual Refuge Open House Weekend is slated for September 11 and 12, 2004. During this weekend, the entire Refuge is open to hiking, bicycling and deer scouting. All visitors are reminded that they can only be on Refuge lands during daylight hours.

On Saturday, the Refuge and the Friends of Shiawassee NWR are sponsoring a self-guided auto tour beginning at the parking lot at the west end of Curtis Road. The tour runs from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. This will be the only time this year, since the tour scheduled in May was rained out, that people can drive through the "heart" of the Refuge. Visitors will have an opportunity to see a variety of Refuge wildlife while driving along the 7-mile route. For safety reasons, we ask that bicyclists and hikers refrain from using

the auto tour route while vehicles are on it. The Friends will have hot dogs for sale under their tent in the Curtis Road parking lot.

Also on Saturday, you can cast your votes for your favorite photos in the Refuge Amateur Photo Contest. Photos will be displayed at the Refuge Headquarters from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Winners will be announced by October 1 and officially recognized at the Friend's monthly board meeting on October 13 at 7:00 p.m.

### Volunteers Needed!

We need friendly people to help visitors along the Auto Tour. We need some folks throughout the day to help at the auto tour's entrance and exit and with the photo contest at the Refuge Headquarters. If you have any questions or want to volunteer, please contact Becky Goche at (989) 759-1669.

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### Special Points:

- Don't miss your chance to learn more about shorebirds at a special workshop on September 15 and 16. More details on page 4.
- A brand-new family hike will be offered on October 29 at Green Point ELC. Check the Calendar of Events for more information.
- Please check the trail closure schedule before you come out to the Refuge this fall.

## 2004 Deer Drawing Wrap-up

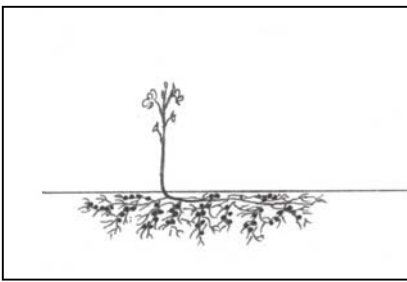
The Refuge received 3,725 applications for 1,051 permits available in 17 different hunts. Actually, hundreds more applications were sent in, but were voided because of incomplete information. Only one hunt, Hunt 216, was undersubscribed. Twenty youth who participated in the MYHEC program and 150 archery hunters drawn through an open draw in August will also get a chance to hunt

the Refuge, bringing the total count of hunters to 1,221. Two staff members spent over 100 hours entering the applications into the priority point system software program. The drawing was held on August 11 and letters were sent to all those who drew. To check your point totals or to see if you were drawn, visit our website and click on hunting.

# “Conserve Me, Seymour”

Article and Illustrations by David Peters, Tractor Operator

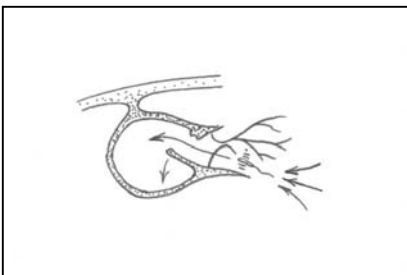
If you were to question visitors leaving Shiawassee’s Woodland Trail whether they observed any predators on their hike, and a quick search of their memory produced no encounter with coyotes or red-tailed hawks, they’d likely reply in the negative. But preying upon others is not an uncommon trait in the natural world, and along the trail they actually would have passed by hundreds of species of birds, insects, spiders and others, all actively searching or lying in wait for another animal to be their next meal. In fact, when crossing the foot bridge over Bullhead Creek, they had passed by one of the refuge’s most unique predators. Floating there in the clear waters of the creek is a carnivorous plant.



*Common bladderwort*

The plant is known as common bladderwort, and it shares its appetite for animals with a mere forty-four other carnivorous plants species that are found in the United States and Canada. By far the most well known of these is the Venus

flytrap, but also included, in addition to the bladderworts, are pitcher plants, sundews, and butterworts. Bladderworts tend to be the most inconspicuous of the group. The presence of the common bladderwort plants in Bullhead Creek is revealed only when their short, erect reddish flower stems rise above water’s surface in mid-summer, bearing small yellow blossoms, roughly similar in shape to a snapdragon.



*Cross section of bladderwort trap capturing prey.*

Aside from its flowers, the common bladderwort plant grows fully submerged and unrooted. It has narrow filament-like leaves, among which are the hollow, bladder-like “traps” that the plant uses to capture its prey. These are just 1 to 5 millimeters in

size, and are equipped with a hinged “door” attended by

fine bristles. When tiny aquatic animals wander near the bladder opening and disturb these bristles, it triggers the door to open. Water and prey are sucked into the empty bladder until it is full, then the door shuts tight. Once the prey is digested and its food value absorbed by the plant, the excess water and fluid are excreted from the bladder, and it is set to trap again.

Unlike animal predators, bladderworts and their fellow carnivorous plants don’t have to eat to survive, but having a meal to digest is obviously beneficial to them, and plants that do are healthier and more vigorous. Unfortunately, all the food in the world won’t give them the strength they need to resist the forces that are causing their populations to decline.

All carnivorous plant species grow in places that are quite wet. In the case of the common bladderwort, you can’t get any wetter than floating in a body of water, but the vast majority of the species grow in the moist, acidic soils of bogs, fens, and coastal savannas. So it goes without saying that any activities that drain the surface or subsurface water (in other words, lower the water table), from these places soon make them inhospitable to the plants. When wisdom prevails and such habitat is more or less protected, the next threat to be confronted is that of being crowded out, either by invasive exotic plants, or by native plant species that are spreading unchecked due to the suppression of wildfires. As if all that isn’t enough, carnivorous plants, due to their uniqueness in the plant world, face the additional threat of over-collection for the nursery and florist trades. Such poaching activity has been particularly damaging to the Venus fly trap and the white-topped pitcher plants.

The quiet little common bladderwort may be relatively free from this later threat, but not the destruction of wetlands, lowering of water tables, or competition by invasive plants. You can help counteract these threats by supporting efforts of public agencies and private groups to protect carnivorous plant habitat, and also by encouraging the enactment of scientifically based legislation that protects shared water resources. Successful predator conservation efforts such as reintroduction of wolves can only have superficial biological value if we fail to provide a secure future for North America’s unique and admirable “leafy” carnivores as well.

# A Note from the Ephemeral Manager

*By Ed DeVries, Acting Refuge Manager*

The Spencer family has moved on west to Oregon and we've been busy taking up the slack. There is life after Doug, but we will miss the Spencer's and all their contributions to the Shiawassee NWR. Active recruitment for Doug's replacement began on August 9, and will continue through August 30. I provided a sort of sales pitch memo to our Regional Office which will supplement their recruitment efforts by describing the refuge and the Saginaw area in an attractive way to prospective applicants. This really wasn't that much of a chore as the refuge and the area easily sells itself. Shiawassee NWR is a refuge of diversity, and has great habitat management capability with its system of dikes, pumps, and water control structures. With nearly 300 species of resident and migratory birds listed as having used the refuge at some point, there is a great chance of encountering new and unusual bird species every year. Insect, plant, and wildlife species are here in abundance, as anyone who walks the refuge trails can attest. Saginaw County also has much to offer, with shopping, arts, culture, recreation and so many other things to do, that once I started bragging it all up, it was hard to stop. And I didn't even mention the wall-eye fishing and great hunting opportunities! See what I mean?

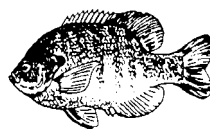
Another thing we have here is a refuge staff that has a well-founded reputation for being an efficient, dedicated team, which will also prove attractive to any applicant. So I don't think our regional office folks will have a problem finding good candidates for the refuge manager position. I suspect the new manager will come on board sometime after October 1. This will be an adjustment period for all of us and collectively we all have concerns regarding what direction or management style this new manager will have. I've heard some of these concerns from friends and staff, believe me. It's only natural to have some concerns. Change isn't easy for some of us. There have been nine refuge managers in the 51-year history of Shiawassee NWR, and I've had the pleasure of knowing or working with five of the past managers. They each operated a little differently from one another, with different styles, ambitions, and emphases. I want you to understand and remember that the present refuge staff will be here to aid the new manager during this transition, as they have with past managers. And now that we have the Friends Group, as well as many other friends and supporters, there are even more folks who will contribute

to this cultural process.

So I don't think we need to be overly concerned or overly worried about the future. There are many good folks in the National Wildlife Refuge System, and one of them is out there waiting to become our new manager. I believe there will be many excellent applicants for the manager position. I'm confident that whoever our new manager is, he or she will pick up the reins and continue with the good work that has been established here for the last half century. I'm also confident that all of you will do your part to welcome and assist the new manager during the transitional period that lies ahead. This is a great refuge, with a great group of staff, friends, and community supporters, and we'll continue to do what's right for the natural and cultural resources we've been mandated to protect, conserve, and enhance. I'll see you on the refuge.

## New Aquariums at Green Point

*By Becky Goche, Park Ranger*



After years of keeping fish and turtles in leaky, rusty aquariums, Green Point now has two, brand new, 100–gallon, acrylic aquariums, each with a lifetime guaran-

tee! Staff from Blue Lagoon in Saginaw finished installing the aquariums and their new furnishings on August 17. The hardest part of their installation was removing the old aquariums constructed of glass, metal and slate. It took two people to carry them out! The new aquariums weigh about a tenth of the old ones and feature blue sides and back, complete with a top to reduce evaporation and hold the filtering equipment, yet still allow cleaning and feeding of the fish and turtles.

A Challenge Cost Share Grant from the FWS, along with several partners who had contributed money to Green Point provided the funding for the new aquariums. Now we want to add some new freshwater fish to the aquariums, i.e. crappie, perch, bluegill, catfish, carp, bass, etc. If you can help find small fish of these species, give me a call at Green Point (989) 759-1669.

# Volunteers Needed for “Nature’s Halloween Hike” Planned for October 29

By Becky Goche, Park Ranger

The Refuge and the Friends of Shiawassee NWR are planning a family night hike on the evening of October 29. “Nature’s Halloween Hike” will be held at the Green Point ELC beginning at 7:00 p.m. The hike will be geared for families and is not intended to scare anyone. Rather, we hope to offer some insights and interesting tidbits about the Refuge’s nightlife and wildlife. We plan to lead small groups of 15 to 18 people (we recommend reservations) around a portion of Green Point’s trails with stops at various stations along the way. Groups will leave at 15 minute intervals so that there is a break in between each group. Hikers who are waiting to go out onto the trails will entertain themselves with various indoor activities and enjoy light refreshments. It should be a fun night, but we will need lots of volunteers to pull it off!

Based upon the large turnouts we’ve received at past night hikes, we expect that this will be no different. We will need friendly, outgoing people to help with serving refreshments, leading groups on the trail, and sharing information at the stations along the trail. For the most part, we will provide you with a “script” or outline to follow at your station. It’s up to you to creatively get your points across to each group! In addition, we will need a few people to assist with setup before the event and clean up afterwards. Capable volunteers of all ages will be considered for the different tasks. If you are interested in helping, please contact me at (989) 759-1669 for more information.

*“We will need friendly, outgoing people...”*

## Shorebird Sister Schools Educator Workshop Offered September 15 and 16

Attention teachers, non-formal educators, parents who home school, and anyone else who is interested in shorebird conservation! Ottawa NWR, Shiawassee NWR and the Friends of Shiawassee NWR are sponsoring a ***Shorebird Sister Schools Educator Workshop*** at Green Point ELC. This workshop will be held on September 15 from 5:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. and September 16 from 5:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. Cost for this workshop is \$20 and includes meals and refreshments, curriculum guides and many other resources. Rebecca Hinkle, Public Use Specialist at Ottawa NWR in Ohio, will lead this workshop. In addition, Bob Russell, a migratory birds biologist from the FWS Regional Office in Ft. Snelling, Minnesota, will assist, along with other local bird experts.

The ***Shorebird Sister Schools Program*** encourages public participation in the conservation of shorebirds and their habitats by connecting people along flyways and increasing their awareness and knowledge of local natural resources to inspire community conservation. The program combines classroom learning, field trips, a web site, and distance learning activities to keep the

public active in shorebird conservation. For more information about this program visit <http://sssp.fws.gov>.

This workshop will include an overview of the ***Shorebird Sister Schools Program*** including web components, introduction to shorebird identification, biology and conservation issues, overview of the Arctic-Nesting Shorebirds curriculum, pen pal components, and a field trip to the Shiawassee NWR to learn more identification skills, use of journals and habitat needs. We will also review the Shorebird Trunk which is available on loan from Green Point ELC to assist in your shorebird curriculum.

You must register before 4:00 p.m. on September 13 by calling Green Point at (989) 759-1669. For more information about the ***Shorebird Sister Schools Program*** and workshop content, please contact Rebecca Hinkle at (419) 898-0014, ext. 813. For all other questions, contact Becky Goche at (989) 759-1669.

# Friends Help with Open House and Plan Future Programs

*By Richard Hodge, Friends Board of Directors*

The Friends of Shiawassee NWR will once again be selling hotdogs and other items during the September 11th Open House at the Refuge on Curtis Road. Thankfully the detour is no longer a barrier. This will kick off our fall and winter activities. We are planning several interesting programs in the months of October, January, March and May. Activities planned include a "Nature's Halloween Hike" (see articles for more information), a program on butterflies, and a report on the Island surveys that took place this summer. Keep an eye out for the dates of these programs and additional ones, too. All these activities take time and personnel so if anyone would like to help, please contact Becky at Green Point Learning Center or any of the Friends Board Member. These include Charles Hoover, Ed Becker, Barbara Werle, Janet Martineau, Richard Hodge, Bob Grefe, Dick Von Berg, Larry Abraham, Herman Rindhage, and Gary Dankert.

## Cass River Unit Trail

Trail planning is continuing on the Cass River unit

## Refuge Trails Will Close for Deer and Goose Hunting

The trails on the Refuge will be closed at various times this fall and winter to accommodate our hunting programs. Only hunters with Refuge permits are allowed in the trail areas during the closed periods. Signs will be posted at each of the trail heads to let visitors know when they are closed.

### Ferguson Bayou Trail at Curtis Road

October 1—5, 2004

November 1—10, 2004

November 20—21, 2004

November 27—28, 2004

December 1—18, 2004

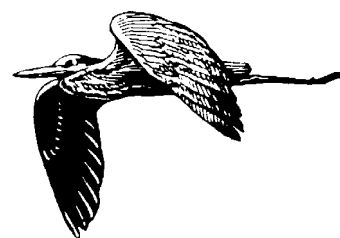
December 27—31, 2004

Please note that this trail will also be closed during most of October until 1:00 p.m. during goose hunting. Dates were still pending at the time this newsletter went out.

with hopes of getting grants to begin work on construction in the near future. If you have been out there, you may have noticed the stakes with pink ribbon that have been placed to mark the trail. Spicer Engineering was contracted to design the trail with a grant that we got from the Saginaw Community Foundation.

## Board Meetings

Board meetings are held on the second Wednesday of each month at 7:00 p.m. at Green Point ELC. Everyone is invited to attend. For more information about the Friends group or to become a member, contact the Friends of Shiawassee NWR, P.O. Box 20129, Saginaw, MI 48602. New Friends membership brochures are available at the Refuge Headquarters and at Green Point.



### Woodland Trail at Stroebel Road

October 1—5, 2004

November 1—10, 2004

November 15—16, 2004

December 11—18, 2004

### Cass River Unit in Bridgeport Township

October 1—5, 2004

November 1—10, 2004

December 1—10, 2004

December 27—31, 2004

### Green Point ELC in Saginaw

Trails at Green Point ELC remain open for hiking during daylight hours, everyday. Please remember that bicycles and pets are not allowed at Green Point.

Shiawassee NWR  
6975 Mower Rd.  
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Phone: 989-777-5930  
Fax: 989-777-9200  
Hours: M - F, 7:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

Refuge Reporter is published quarterly  
by the Friends of Shiawassee NWR.

**We're on the web!**

**[Http://midwest.fws.gov/shiawassee](http://midwest.fws.gov/shiawassee)**



***Shorebird Workshop for Educators and Others offered on September 15 & 16. More information inside.***

## Teachers—Green Point ELC Offers Free Field Trips and So Much More!

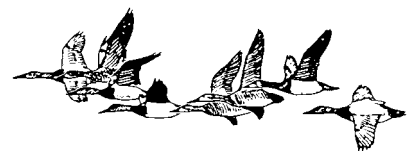
*by Becky Goche, Park Ranger*

The summer is over and the kids and teachers are back in school. For some, this is a time of mourning the loss of fun and relaxation of the summer months. For others, this is a time of exploration and learning new things. At Green Point, we offer you and your students an opportunity to explore the outdoor world and learn what it has to offer!

Green Point offers a variety of on-site field trips for all ages of students. You pick the program or we can offer suggestions based upon your grade level. You bring your students here and we do all the work. Ok, so we may ask for your help with a few things. It's as simple as that.

Worried that you may not have the funding to come to us? No problem. We'll come to you! We have several in-classroom programs available and more are in the planning stages. We also have many trunks available that you can check out for a two-week period that will enhance what you're teaching in the classroom. The only cost to you is your time spent picking up and dropping off the trunk at Green Point.

For more information about our environmental education programs and other resources, get a copy of our Educator's Guide. Call Green Point at (989) 759-1669 or download a copy from our website at <http://midwest.fws.gov/shiawassee> and click on "education."



# Calendar of Events



## **Refuge Open House Weekend**

**September 11 and 12, 2004**

The entire Refuge is open to hiking bicycling and deer scouting during daylight hours.

## **Refuge Open House Auto Tour**

**September 11, 2004, 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.**

**Begins at parking lot at west end of Curtis Road**

See Refuge wildlife from the comforts of your own vehicle. The 7-mile route will take you into areas normally closed to the public. The Friends will have refreshments for sale under their tent at the Curtis Road parking lot.

## **2004 Refuge Photo Contest Voting**

**September 11, 2004, 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.**

**Refuge Headquarters, 6975 Mower Road**

Cast your votes for your favorite photos entered into this year's Refuge Photo Contest. Photos will be displayed at the Refuge Headquarters. Winners will be announced by October 1 and recognized on October 13, 7:00 p.m. at the Friends Board Meeting.

## **Shorebird Sister Schools Workshop**

**September 15 & 16, 2004, Times listed in article**

**Green Point ELC**

Learn more about the Shorebird Sister Schools Program and get cool stuff. Geared for teachers and others interested in shorebird conservation. Cost is \$20. Registration is required by calling (989) 759-1669.



## **Nature's Halloween Hike**

**October 29, 2004, 7:00 p.m. (Reservations are recommended since space is limited!)**

**Green Point ELC**

Learn about the Refuge's nightlife and wildlife as you hike in guided groups along Green Point's trails. This is geared for families and is not intended to be scary. Groups will leave at 15 minute intervals, beginning at 7:00 p.m. until 8:00 p.m. (5 groups total). We recommend reserving your spot by calling (989) 759-1669 because space is limited. Any remaining openings in each group will be filled on a first come, first served basis. Refreshments will be provided. Co-sponsor for this hike is the Friends of Shiawassee NWR.

# FRIENDS OF SHIAWASSEE NWR MEMBERSHIP PAGE

## Friends of Shiawassee NWR Membership

\_\_\_\_ Individual: \$10/year or \$25/three years

\_\_\_\_ Family: \$25/year or \$60/three years

\_\_\_\_ Supporting: \$50/year\*

\*Includes your choice of t-shirt, sweatshirt or hat. Please indicate your choice.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip code: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

**\*\*We now take Mastercard and Visa!\*\***

Credit Card Number: \_\_\_\_\_ Exp. Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature on Card: \_\_\_\_\_

Or make checks payable to "Friends of Shiawassee NWR", PO Box 20129, Saginaw, MI, 48602.

Your membership is important to us and to the Refuge! Membership fees and cash donations go towards Refuge projects like newsletter publication, maintaining trails, sponsoring programs, buying bird see and much, much more. Fill out the above application and mail today! You can also visit our website for more information at <http://friendsofshiawassee.org>.

### Board of Directors Meetings

Board meetings held on the second Wednesday of each month at 7:00 p.m. at the Green Point Environmental Learning Center, 3010 Maple Street in Saginaw. General meetings with special programs are held at various times throughout the year. Friends Board of Directors Officers as of July, 2004 are:

President – Charles Hoover

Vice President 1 – Dick Von Berg

Vice President 2 – Steve MacAlpine

Treasurer – Richard Hodge

Secretary – Barb Werle

**Acting Refuge Manager:** Ed DeVries

**Volunteer Coordinator/Green Point Director:** Becky Goche

**Newsletter Editing and Layout:** Becky Goche

**Website:** <http://midwest.fws.gov/shiawassee>

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